

An introduction to AAHOA

By J.K. Patel
Special to HARM

When meeting people for the first time, most of us like to explain briefly who we are and what we do. So as we, the Asian American Hotel Owners Association, introduce ourselves here, we would like to give you some background about our organization.



J.K. Patel

Some in the hospitality industry are familiar with AAHOA, but many others know little about the purpose and the programs of our organization. We trust this column, scheduled to appear every month, will change that. Let's first begin with some background.

During the 1970s and '80s, many young people who immigrated to America from India, Africa and the United Kingdom, chose the hospitality industry as their career. Why? Because it suited their entrepreneurial values of working hard and operating a family-oriented business.

They faced the same marketplace obstacles as other business

people, but they encountered an additional and unique problem: discrimination from certain vendors, bankers and insurers. Specifically, in the mid-1980s, insurance companies across the United States suddenly began to cancel insurance to all Indian hotel owners based on rumors of fraudulent claims.

AAHOA was formed in 1989 in Atlanta to help overcome the problem—namely, to raise the professionalization of hoteliers of Indian heritage. And in the media, to show bankers, vendors, insurers and others that doing business with Asian-Americans is good business.

Among the earliest and strongest advocates of AAHOA were such industry leaders as Michael Leven and Henry Silverman. We're proud that they are still some of our best friends, both personally as well as professionally.

AAHOA today

So where is AAHOA today? It has grown to more than 4,000 members that together own more than 7,500 hotels and more

than 640,000 rooms throughout the country. Our members own about 46 percent of properties in the economy lodging segment and about 26 percent of all hotel properties in the United States.

We actively encourage our members to obtain their CREA designation. We also have a comprehensive educational seminar series, and we are currently conducting a nationwide series of 25 regional conferences—but we'll save some of those details for later columns.

Moving forward

We are pleased with our progress, but we are not content.

We believe that for AAHOA and for the hotel industry, our best days are still ahead. That's why we are looking forward to sharing ideas and to working together.

At AAHOA, we—like each of you—are committed to always meeting the changing demands of consumers and the marketplace.

J.K. Patel is the 1996 chairman of AAHOA and the co-owner of North Point Hospitality Group, which operates properties in the Northeast.



HFS signs 10-year contract with AT&T

PARSIPPANY, N.J.—HFS Inc., based here, recently announced the execution of a preferred vendor agreement with AT&T for sophisticated telecommunications and messaging services for its 11 brands. The 10-year contract is valued at \$1 billion.

The agreement offers AT&T's telecommunications services to HFS' reservations centers and corporate offices, as well as to the more than 5,200 Days Inn, Howard Johnson, Knights Inn, Park Inn, Ramada, Super 8, Travelodge and Village Lodge franchised hotels.

Also, for the first time, it includes the 8,600 Century 21 and ERA residential real-estate offices franchised within the HFS system. This does not include the more than 2,500 Coldwell Banker real-estate offices that will become HFS franchisees when HFS acquires the Coldwell Banker Corp. later this quarter.

Franchisees benefit

"HFS' franchisees will benefit from the huge economies of scale HFS receives by purchasing AT&T's telecommunications

services in bulk at extremely favorable pricing," said Richard Smith, HFS executive vice president of operations. "Our hotel reservation centers alone handle some 35 million calls a year, and there are more than 100,000 brokers and agents affiliated with our franchised real-estate brands who will be able to take advantage of this agreement."

Range of options

Under the agreement, AT&T's telecommunications services include 0+ (operator assisted and credit card calls) for guests staying at HFS properties, toll-free service (800 and 888) and HFS's corporate calls carried via AT&T's Software Defined Network service to international, interstate and intrastate locations.

"The challenge for AT&T is delivering an integrated set of communications options across a very broad range of HFS needs and locations," said Gail McGovern, executive vice president of AT&T Business Markets division. "The administrator of a busy reservation center and the businessperson calling home

need the same quick, clear, reliable connections and superior network performance."

Other AT&T communications services will be used in the marketing programs of HFS franchisees. For example, Century 21 brokers and agents are testing AT&T Personal Reach service, a new call-answering service that helps them to receive calls they would otherwise miss. It also enables potential home buyers and sellers to reach agents instantly via toll-free connections during crucial negotiation periods.

"By negotiating preferred vendor agreements with only the best companies in each industry, we add real value for our franchisees and provide a virtually expense-free revenue source for HFS," Smith said. "This agreement fits the long-term strategy of both companies to be the global leaders in their respective industries. A 10-year agreement is unusual within the telecommunications industry these days, which indicates HFS' belief in AT&T as a significant partner over the years to come."

on the AAHOA calendar

Regional Meetings

- ▲ May 29 Miami
- ▲ June 4 Memphis
- ▲ June 5 Little Rock, Ark.
- ▲ June 12 St. Louis

Operations Seminars

- ▲ June 6-9 San Francisco
- ▲ July 13-14 Chattanooga, Tenn.

Annual Conference

- ▲ Dec 10-13 Orlando

For additional information, contact AAHOA at (404) 810-8700.

Accommodation by the Book — An Excerpt

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Table tents, wall plaques, counter signs, and door decals—FREE signage that lets new smokers and smokers alike know you accommodate them. More suggestions for accommodating your guests can be found in The Accommodation Program hotel Source Book. Receive a FREE along with a catalog for other FREE materials when you participate in The Accommodation Program. Look for the reply card in this publication or call 1-800-929-1414.

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